Allocation of funds in budget for Western Central Railway located in Jabalpur

†755. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for allocating Rs. 50 lakhs only in the Budget for 2001-2002 to Western-Central Railway, located in Jabalpur;

(b) whether the said Railway Zone is being abolished; and

(c) if so, the reasons trherefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) to (c) An outlay of Rs. 50 lakhs during 2001-2002 has been provided for in the budget. The Railways are presently facing acute resource constraints necessitating a review of the investment planning. The proposed new Zones/Divisions including one at Jabalpur new zone will gradually become operational, depending upon the result of the review and the availability of investible resources for this purpose by the Railways.

Gauge-conversion of Jabalpur-Gondia rail line

†756. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for the delay in gauge-conversion work of Jabalpur-Gondia rail line;

(b) whether this project has been placed in the uncertainty category;

(c) whether any time frame has been fixed to complete the project;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) the reasons for not getting permission to block the Gondia-Balaghat middle line; and

(f) whether there is any plan to begin work of this project from the Jabalpur; stating the hindrance in starting conversion work from Jabalpur and despite assurance by the G.M., Central Railway to Members of Parliament?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) Work of Gauge Conversion of Jabalpur-Gondia line is being progressed as per the operational requirement and availability of resources.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) Work of construction of a major bridge on Bagh river has been taken up. The blocking of line between Gondia-Balaghat will be considered after completion of this bridge and as per the operational requirement.

(f) The work is in progress between Gondia and Balaghat. Works which can be done without blocking the line have been taken up. Final Location Survey for Jabalpur-Balaghat has been completed recently. Land acquisition for detoured alignment near Jabalpur has also been processed.

Committee on rail safety

757. SHRIAMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Justice H.L. Khanna Committee which was appointed by Government to look into the issue of rail safety, was highly critical of the glaring neglect of safety-related issues, particularly on the state of bridges and track maintenance;

(b) if so, what are the salient feature of the report and the number of bridges identified by it to be of unusable age; and

(c) how many of them have since been replaced or repaired so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) to (c) Railway Safety Review Committee under the Chairmanship of Justice H.R. Khanna recommended liquidation of arrears of track renewals in 7 years with one time grant from Central Government and carrying out work of rehabilitation/reconstruction of bridges in need of such work in 5 years.

The Committee also recommended that within 1 year all bridges that are today declared as 'distressed' and others over 100 years in age or of early steel, should be subjected to a super check by a task force and rehabilitation of distressed bridges should be completed in a time span of 5 years alongwith fresh accruals. Committee has not identified any bridge as of unusable age.